

Committee on Resources

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[Home](#) [Press Gallery](#) [Subcommittees](#) [Issues](#) [Legislation](#) [Hearing Archives](#)

**Statement of Congressman Don Sherwood
June 17, 2004
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. As a former member of this Subcommittee, I know and appreciate the important work you do, and I am grateful for your time and attention this morning. I am pleased to testify today in support of legislation I introduced on June 2nd to designate the Grey Towers National Historic Landmark in Milford, Pennsylvania, as a National Historic Site.

I don't know, Mr. Chairman, if you or any of the members of this Subcommittee have ever been to Grey Towers. I would be happy to personally show you this unique facility if you decide to visit at some point. I am proud that this historic building and its surrounding land is in my Congressional District. It is an important national treasure from an historic and architectural standpoint, and an active center for scholarship, training and public education on conservation and forestry.

Grey Towers was the home of Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service and the Governor of Pennsylvania for two terms. The Pinchot family donated Grey Towers and 102 acres to the U.S. Forest Service in 1963. In administering the site, the Forest Service works closely with the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, a non-profit group committed to continuing the forest conservation values and philosophies espoused by Gifford Pinchot.

The Grey Towers mansion gets a great deal of use. Last year over 16,000 people from all over the country visited the site, which has undergone \$12 million in renovation work over the last decade. It is expected that visitorship will grow to over 30,000 each year with improvements that are being made to improve parking. Nearly 2,500 regional school children participate in conservation education programs each year at Grey Towers. Almost 2,000 people from natural resource federal agencies and NGOs took part in conservation and forestry focused activities at the Grey Towers conference center.

Grey Towers was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1962, but enabling legislation has never been enacted to define its mission and function beyond historic preservation. The increased status of "National Historic Site" would make Grey Towers part of a nationally recognized system, give it a higher degree of permanence to the Forest Service mission and its partnerships, and enhance its role as a key economic asset to the local community.

The legislation would give the Forest Service more flexibility to accomplish its goals and its mission and move ahead in program development and delivery at Grey Towers. The bill calls for the site to be administered for natural resource professional development, education and research, preservation of the facility, public recreation and the continuation of Gifford Pinchot's legacy. It authorizes land acquisition on a willing seller basis and the authorization of fees and charges for admission and use of the site.

The legislation would make permanent the authority for the Pinchot Institute for Conservation to convey to the Forest Service funds collected for the care and maintenance of Grey Towers. This authority has been provided for the past several years through the Interior Appropriations Bill, which funds the Forest Service.

I look forward today to hearing from the Forest Service. Chief Dale Bosworth assured me in testimony both this year and last year before the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee that the Forest Service views Grey Towers as a significant national asset and that it would be appropriate to increase its status as a federal site.

The bill enjoys widespread support by community and historical groups in my Congressional District. I would like to submit for the record letters in support of the legislation from the Pike County Historical Society, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Milford Enhancement Committee, the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau and the Pike County Chamber of Commerce.

I am also pleased to report that Pennsylvania Senators Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum are considering the introduction of a companion bill in the Senate.

Mr. Chairman, we have an opportunity with this legislation to make an appropriate change in the designation of Grey Towers that will enhance the ability of this resource for the education and enjoyment of our citizens and promote responsible forestry and conservation. I am grateful for this opportunity to testify and I encourage the Subcommittee's favorable consideration.